ABRAHAM LINCOLN

AS A MAN AMONG MEN

G. LYNN SUMNER

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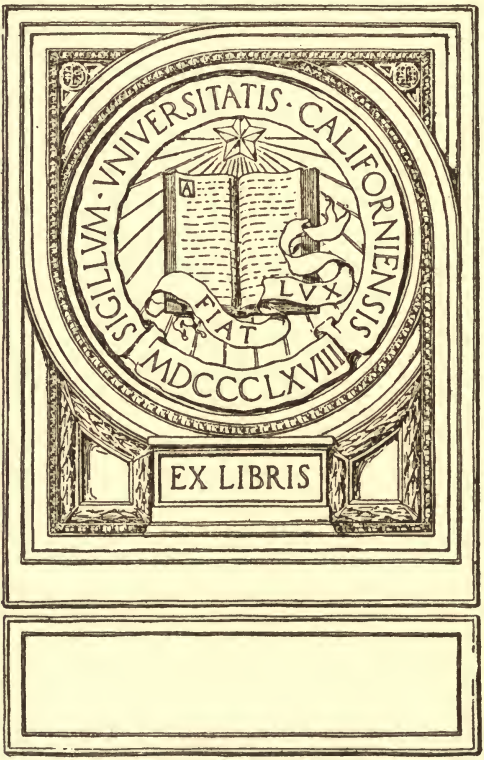

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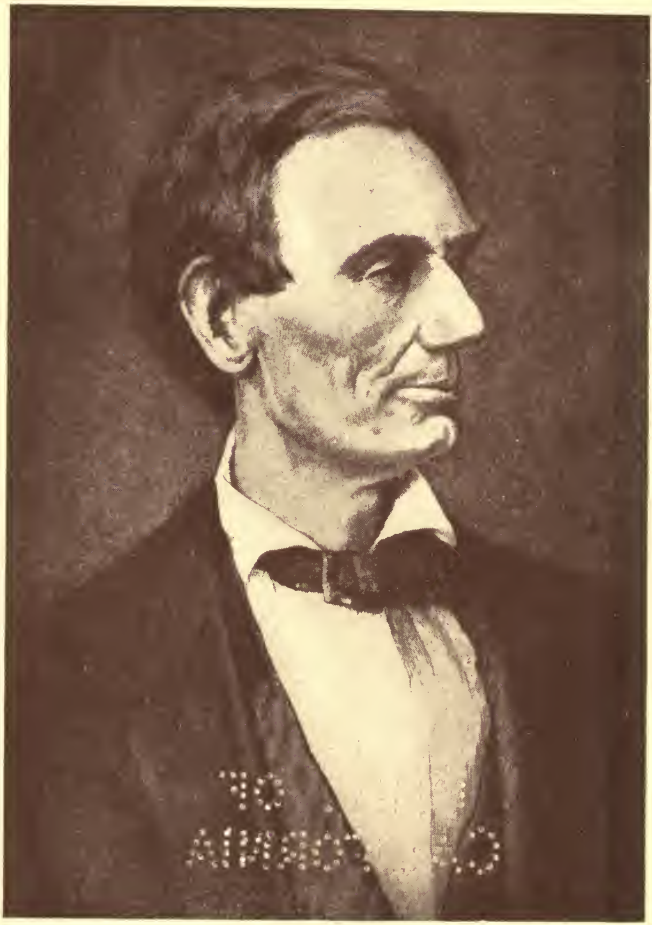

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From the original etching by Earl Horter

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By

G. LYNN SUMNER

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Victory Latin

TO MY FRIEND
DOUGLAS MALLOCH

564821

If I Should Carve a Lincoln

By DOUGLAS MALLOCH

If I should carve a Lincoln, I would take
No snow-white marble, but a rugged rock,
One that the frosts of Winter could not break,
That had withstood the ocean's thundering shock,
Some solid rock amid the shifting sands,
Unmoved by storm, unaltered by the wave,
Some granite giant that forever stands
To mark the harbor with a light to save.

If I should carve a Lincoln, I would shape
Some promontory lifting from the sea,
Standing, as Lincoln stood, a mighty cape
Thrust forward into time a century,
Looking, as Lincoln looked, beyond the shore,
Across the ocean of the future years,
A rock to stand for men forevermore
And point the way to other pioneers.

If I should carve a Lincoln, I would form
A figure from a rock that loved the sun,
A rock that glistened after every storm
And smiled with verdure when the rain was done,
A rock where little children came to play
And violets to blossom on the slope,
That found, like Lincoln, humor in each day,
In words of humor finding words of hope.

If you would carve a Lincoln, such a stone
You will require, O sculptor, for your art,
Some stone gigantic standing thus alone,
High as his mind, and broad as Lincoln's heart.
We may not hope to shape with human hands
A fit memorial for such as he—
Leave Time to carve it from some rock that stands,
Some new Gibraltar, by our western sea.

To G. Lynn Sumner
With affectionate regards
July 27, 1922

NOTE

The material in this little volume originally constituted an address before the Kiwanis Club of Scranton, Pennsylvania, on February 15, 1922. It has been preserved in this form at the suggestion of many friends.

For both inspiration and information, the author wishes to make grateful acknowledgment to Ida M. Tarbell's "Life of Lincoln," Alonzo Rothschild's "Lincoln, Master of Men," and Dr. Russell H. Conwell's "Why Lincoln Laughed."

G. Lynn Sumner

Scranton, Pa.
December 1, 1922

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

AS A MAN AMONG MEN

IF you stand upon the top of a great mountain and look about you, you see rugged rocks, and yawning crevices, and precipitous slopes, and on every hand peaks of lesser prominence, and you are conscious only that the height upon which you stand is part of a great upheaval in nature's architecture.

But as you descend the mountain and draw away from it, the rocks and crevices so prominent when close at hand soften into dim details, and as you go on across the valley or the plain mile after mile and look back, the mountain on which you stood a

little while before stands out in majestic splendor and the lesser peaks become but a setting that adds by contrast to the inspiring height that now overshadows and out-glories all.

Just so has the passing of the years added glory to the greatness of Lincoln. And so have the men among whom he moved in that turbulent period of the nation's great internal conflict become but lesser figures that add by contrast to the stature of the greatest American.

There are so many phases to Lincoln's greatness that in so brief a time one can touch but lightly on his character.

I might speak of him as a great lawyer, for his principles of practice established a code of ethics for members of the bar.

I might speak of him as a great orator, for his eloquence was the kind that carried conviction to the souls of men.

I might speak of him as a great writer, for his letters and speeches and state papers are evidence of his mastery of the English language.

I might speak of him as a great statesman, for he has been called "the greatest ruler of men the world has ever known."

But I am going to pass over all these characteristics of his greatness and speak of him as a man among men, and of his influence upon two or three of the outstanding figures of his time.

I think we sometimes forget that the first forty-five years of Lincoln's life were spent in comparative ob-

scurity. We are familiar now with the struggles of his earlier years, because in a realization of his greatness we have gone back and learned about him—his humble birth, the pitiful poverty of his boyhood, the hardships of his youth, the simple story of his middle life. The truth is that with the exception of three inconsequential terms in the Illinois Legislature, beginning in 1836, and a single term in Congress in 1846 and '47, Lincoln did not appear prominently in public life until 1854. Almost continuously for twenty years he practiced law on the circuit in Illinois.

During this same period, there was developing, also in Illinois, another man with whom Lincoln's life was destined to come into fre-

quent and eventually momentous contact. That man was Stephen A. Douglas.

You could scarcely imagine two men more strangely in contrast in physical appearance. Lincoln, six feet four, long, lanky, awkward, homely. Douglas, short, stocky, with a great head, a strong face, always immaculately dressed. Yet their physical contrast was no greater than the contrast in their political successes during their early years. Both as young men had sat with the crowd around Joshua Speed's store in Springfield and discussed, as was the custom, the issues of the day. Both had been suitors for the hand of Mary Todd. Both had served in the Illinois Legislature in 1836.

Then their ways parted, Lincoln returning to his law practice, and Douglas, a young idol of the Democrats of Illinois, launching forth into a career of political achievement scarcely, if ever, equalled in American history. In the legislature at 23, he became at 26 Secretary of State of Illinois, at 28 a Judge of the Illinois Supreme Court, at 30 a member of Congress, and at 34 a United States Senator. His star was in the swift ascendency, and its course seemed to lead straight to a realization of the ambition of his life—the Presidency.

But with all his ability, his splendid qualities, and his splendid service to his party, his state, and the nation, Douglas had one weakness. To attain his ambition he was willing to

compromise on the supreme and vital question of slavery. To win the Presidency he dare not alienate the South, and so, although a staunch supporter in 1848 of the Missouri Compromise, which definitely placed a limit upon slave territory, he broke faith with it in 1854 and himself introduced an amendment to the Nebraska bill providing that the people of that Territory might themselves determine whether it should be "slave" or "free." This shift in his position on the slave question required an explanation among his constituents and brought him home to Illinois in 1854 to defend his position.

During these years when Douglas was so prominent in public life, Lincoln had followed his progress

with unflagging interest. He had followed, too, every move in the rising tide against slavery. And in Lincoln's mental make-up there was no room for compromise. No matter what his personal ambitions, to the extension of slave territory he was unalterably opposed.

Douglas, seeking large gatherings of people, learned that the State Fair was to be held at Springfield, and on the opening day presented himself and made a speech to an audience that crowded the hall of the State House. During the early part of his address he said: "I understand there is to be a reply to this address, and that Mr. Lincoln, of this city, is to answer me. If this be true, I wish Mr. Lincoln would stand forth." Lincoln was not in the audience at

the time, as Douglas probably well knew.

But the next day, at the same place, and with an equally large audience present, Lincoln was present, and when the challenge was repeated, Lincoln stood forth and at that moment emerged into public life, never again to return to obscurity. For following the speech of Douglas, he mounted the platform and spoke for three hours, delivering what many believe to be the greatest speech of his life.

A few days later Douglas went to Bloomington and Lincoln followed and answered him there. And still a few days later when Douglas appeared at Peoria, Lincoln answered him there. It was after the Peoria meeting that Douglas came to his

opponent and said: "Lincoln, you understand this question of prohibiting slavery in the Territories better than all the opposition in the Senate of the United States. I cannot make anything by debating it with you."

And with this plea he begged Lincoln to desist. To this truce Lincoln agreed and both abandoned the field and returned to their homes. Lincoln's first skirmish with Douglas had been won and Lincoln had made himself the logical and unanimous choice of the Republicans as candidate for Senator four years later.

So now it was 1858 and Douglas was again back in Illinois, this time not merely to defend his policies, but as the Democratic candidate to plead for his reelection to the Senate. And now Lincoln and Douglas for the

first time were matched in a contest for the same high office.

It was in this campaign that the great series of Lincoln-Douglas debates were arranged and carried out. Neither before nor since has there ever been anything like them in American history—two intellectual giants, proceeding from city to city, discussing in public forum the vital, burning issues of the time.

But there was a marked difference in the manner of the two men. Douglas was speaking directly to his audiences. Lincoln was speaking not only to the people before him but also over and beyond them to the people of America.

Some of Lincoln's friends were alarmed at his tactics and warned him that if he were not more careful

Douglas would win. "Perhaps he will," Lincoln answered, "but the battle of 1860 is worth a hundred of this." And he continued his attacks, repeatedly asking Douglas searching questions and forcing him to take in his answers compromising positions that he as persistently sought to avoid. And in this was the foresight of Lincoln revealed. For while Douglas won the election, he won it on a basis that cost him the support of the South in the infinitely greater political crisis two years later.

The debates with Douglas had made Lincoln the outstanding Republican of Illinois. He was still comparatively unknown in the East. But February, 1860, was to witness an event of tremendous significance in Lincoln's political career.

Lincoln's son, Robert, was in school in New Hampshire and when there came from Brooklyn an offer of $200 to speak on a lyceum program in a Brooklyn church, Lincoln immediately accepted because the $200 would enable him to visit his boy at school. After arrangements had been made, however, the Brooklyn people began to doubt whether this little known lawyer from the West could draw a $200 house, so they turned him over to a political club that was conducting in Cooper Union a series of lectures on the slave question.

I think no finer story has ever been told of this Cooper Union speech than that related by Dr. Russell H. Conwell. He had been teaching school in New Hampshire, where he

had been a neighbor of William Cullen Bryant. But in February, 1860, he was in New York going about to churches and to political meetings to hear the great orators of the time. Bryant was to be chairman of the Cooper Union meeting and he invited Conwell and a young friend to come.

As they approached the hall that evening, they found a crowd of disturbers outside and they were stopped and questioned. "Are you nigger-men?" asked one of Conwell. "And," says Conwell, "we thought he was asking us if we were negroes and we answered 'No,' and with that he gave us some dried onions, saying, 'Put these under your coats and when you hear five whistles, throw 'em at the feller speakin'."

Inside there was a crowd, a great, restless crowd. And on the platform was a strange contrast of figures. There was William Cullen Bryant, the Chairman, venerable in his years, charming of manner, perfectly at ease. And over at one side sat the speaker of the evening. His feet were tangled in the rungs of his chair, his eyes were downcast, beside him on the floor was his beaver hat, and in it might be seen the manuscript of his speech.

Finally he arose. One leg of his trousers had caught on the back of his shoe. He had run his fingers through his hair and left a lock standing straight up behind. He had forgotten to remove the pencil over his right ear.

Holding his manuscript in trem-

bling hands, he began to read it in a harsh, unpleasant voice. The audience, already uneasy, grew in restlessness. There were even hisses from one corner of the room. As the minutes dragged on, the suspense became intolerable—they were minutes of agony.

Finally, as he turned the pages of his paper with shaking hands, a sheet dropped unseen to the floor. A moment later he had reached that point in his reading, he saw that something was missing, and he stood there, embarrassed, a pitiable figure. Then suddenly, in desperation, he cast the manuscript aside, and throwing out a long arm, looked full into the faces of his audience and launched into an extemporaneous indictment of slavery. The audience grew still, then

attentive, then absorbed. The change was magical. It was as if some unseen influence was making itself felt. And when the speaker had finished, the whole audience was on its feet in wild applause.

The East now knew Lincoln.

That was the 17th of February, 1860. Three months later Lincoln was nominated at Chicago as the Republican candidate for President. The Democrats, split into two factions on the slave question, put forth two candidates—the Southern wing, Breckinridge, the Northern wing, Stephen A. Douglas. So now again Lincoln and Douglas were contenders, this time for the supreme goal. And Lincoln's victory at last had come.

On March 4, 1861, a vast crowd

had assembled before the East Portico of the Capitol, for a President was about to be inaugurated. On the platform a group of the nation's greatest men waited his coming. Finally Lincoln stepped forth. He wore a new suit of clothes, and there had been few enough new suits in Lincoln's life. But to add to the awkwardness of the situation, he carried a new high silk hat and a gold-headed cane, and he had not the slightest idea what to do with them. After an embarrassed pause, he stood the cane in a corner. But he could find no place for the hat and he stood there holding it. And then, while the eyes of the multitude looked on, Douglas stepped forward, took the hat from his hand, and held it while Lincoln took the oath of office and

delivered his inaugural address. Thus in such simple form came the dramatic climax to their last, long race. While one was crowned with the highest honors to which their conflicting ambitions had aspired, the other humbly held the victor's hat.

During the early months of Lincoln's administration, he had no critic more bitter than Edwin M. Stanton. Stanton, a Democrat, had been Attorney General in the Buchanan cabinet and there had demonstrated his tremendous ability, virtually holding the crumbling Buchanan administration together as it drew to a close. But he looked upon Lincoln's rise to the Presidency as a national disaster. Not only Lincoln's policies, but his personal ap-

pearance were targets for Stanton's invectives. He habitually referred to Lincoln as the "original gorilla" and said that "Du Chaillu was a fool to wander all over Africa in search of what he could so easily have found in Springfield, Illinois."

After the battle of Bull Run, Stanton wrote to Buchanan: "The imbecility of this administration culminated in that catastrophe; and irretrievable misfortune and national disgrace are to be added to the ruin of all peaceful pursuits and national bankruptcy, as the result of Lincoln's 'running the machine,' for five months. It is not unlikely that some change in the War and Navy Departments may take place, but none beyond those departments until Jeff Davis turns out the whole concern."

Yet in January, 1862, nine months after Lincoln's inauguration, Stanton was invited to become a member of his cabinet. Simon Cameron, Secretary of War, had been unequal to the task. A strong man was needed, and Lincoln, seeking only ability and willing to overlook personalities, saw in Stanton the qualities required for the War Department's tremendous responsibility.

Stanton accepted with supreme confidence in himself and no lessening of his contempt for Lincoln. He looked upon the call to duty solely as a personal obligation to save the country. But upon the task before him he centered all his great talents and energies.

It is doubtful whether any act of Lincoln's caused more amazement

among Republicans than his selection of Stanton for the War Office. His friends warned him that Stanton would give him no end of trouble, that he would run away with the whole concern. But Lincoln showed no signs of alarm.

"We may have to treat him," said he, "as they are sometimes obliged to treat a Methodist minister I know of out West. He gets wrought up to so high a pitch of excitement in his prayers and exhortations, that they are obliged to put bricks in his pockets to keep him down. We may have to serve Stanton the same way, but I guess we'll let him jump awhile first."

Lincoln's constant attitude toward Stanton was one of patience and tolerance. He seemed willing to make

any sacrifice of pride, if only Stanton's great energies might be ceaselessly applied to the prosecution of the war.

One day, Owen Lovejoy, heading a delegation of Western men, came down to Washington to urge upon the President the mingling of Western and Eastern troops in order to promote the spirit of national unity. Lincoln thought well of the plan and wrote a note to Stanton suggesting a transfer of certain regiments. When the committee presented it to Stanton he said it was impracticable and refused to carry it out.

"If Lincoln gave that order," said Stanton, "he is a damned fool."

Returning to the White House, Lovejoy gave Lincoln an exact report of the conversation.

"Did Stanton really say I was a damned fool?" asked Lincoln.

"He did," answered Lovejoy.

"Then," said Lincoln, "I must be one, for Stanton is nearly always right."

No one knew and understood better than Lincoln the great problems with which his War Secretary had to contend, and no one was more appreciative of his labors, more ready to sustain him in his struggles to maintain the effectiveness of the army.

"Stanton is the rock upon which are beating the waves of this conflict," he said to some who came complaining of the Secretary's refusal to make an army appointment that they desired. "He fights back the angry waters and prevents them from undermining and overwhelm-

ing the land. I do not see how he survives—why he is not crushed and torn to pieces. Without him I should be destroyed."

Joseph Medill, then publisher of the *Chicago Tribune,* told a story of how, at a most critical period of the war, a new draft was levied and the city of Chicago, which already had furnished 20,000 men, was asked to send 6,000 more. There was a great mass meeting to protest, and Medill headed a delegation that went down to Washington to urge upon the President a reduction in Chicago's allotment.

Lincoln said to them, "Come, I will go over with you to Stanton and you can present your case and we will see what he has to say." When they had made their plea, Stanton

shook his head. "No," he said, "we must have the men."

Then Lincoln, who all this while had been sitting silent, tipped back in a chair, stood up, and there was a cloud almost of anger on his face.

"Gentlemen," he said, "you ought to be ashamed of yourselves. No sections of the North did so much to bring on this war as New England and the Northwest. You in Chicago were calling for it and you got it. And you, Medill, with your *Chicago Tribune* and all its influence, you were among those who wanted it most. Now, when I am trying to carry it through to a successful conclusion and call for more troops to do it, you beg for mercy. Go back to Chicago and raise those men!"

"We went out of that presence,"

said Medill, "thoroughly ashamed of our mission, and we went back to Chicago and raised the 6,000 men."

It was the heroic meeting of such crises as this that broke down Stanton's antagonism toward Lincoln. Gradually, he grew to know the real Lincoln, and as the months went by, contempt vanished, respect replaced it, and at last came a real affection.

But the burden Stanton carried wore down even his rugged health and when, early in 1865, Lee's surrender seemed imminent, Stanton handed the President his resignation and asked to be permitted to retire. And then it was that Lincoln, in a burst of emotion, threw his arms about the other, and said, "Stanton, you have been a good friend and a faithful servant. It is not for you to

say how long the country needs you."

So Stanton remained at his post. And so it happened that on that morning after the fatal shot was fired in Ford's Theater, it was Stanton who sat just outside the door of the room in which Lincoln lay, courageously meeting the emergency, directing all. He issued orders for the protection of others high in the administration, he maintained constant touch with Grant, then hurrying by special train toward Washington, and there within sound of the moaning of the dying President he dictated what is still the best brief account of the awful night's work.

And when at twenty minutes past seven, Abraham Lincoln died, and there was a prayer and a solemn pause, it was Stanton's voice that

broke the stillness with the words: "Now he belongs to the ages."

Lloyd George says, "Lincoln was one of those few great men who lost their nationality in death."

John Drinkwater, building his great drama out of Lincoln's life, considered him one of the immortals. Viewing his greatness from afar, he wrote his play of Lincoln, looking upon him as one of the greatest characters the world has ever known. And when two years later, he made his first visit to America and went out to Springfield, he could scarcely realize that one so great had lived so close to our own time, that here were people still living who had known him and looked into his face.

And it was in something of this same spirit that the other day in

Washington, I thought of it as Lincoln's Washington. Here was the White House where he lived and worked—here were the windows out of which he looked across the broad, sloping lawns. Here were the very streets where he watched the marching troops. Here was the Capitol and the East Portico where he and Douglas stood that day in March of '61, and where he stood again and delivered the never-to-be-forgotten second inaugural. Here was the little house in Tenth Street where they carried him through the narrow doorway and into the little back room—to die. And down by the Potomac was the magnificent Lincoln Memorial, the shrine to which men come from the ends of the earth to pay tribute to his memory.

Yet that is not the real Lincoln shrine. For that mountainous figure, rising out of a humble cabin in Hodgenville, Kentucky, stands today in majestic splendor, so that the rising and the setting sun cast West and East across the land the shadow of its influence into all our lives and set up a Lincoln shrine in the heart of every American.

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